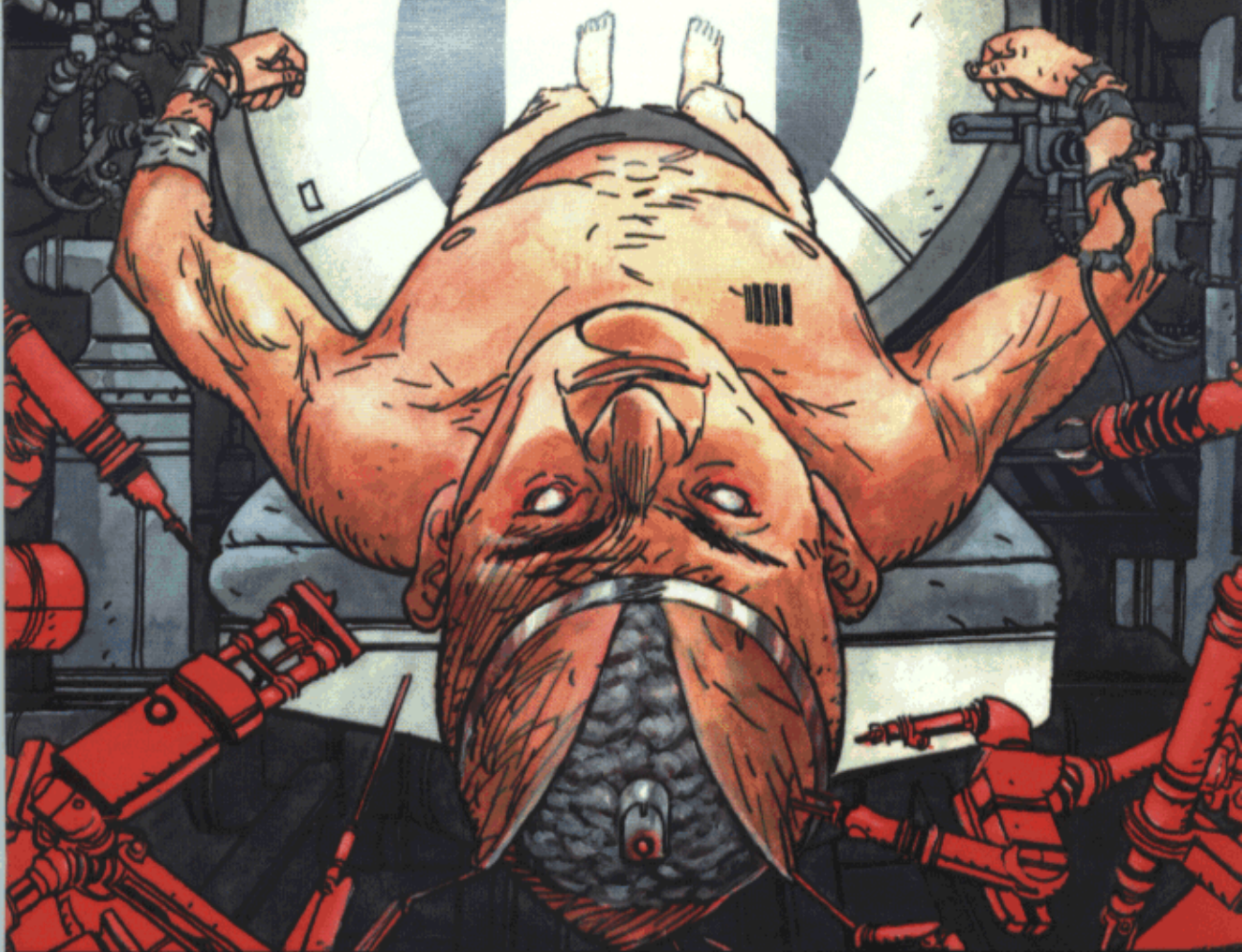


EXPOSE ABERRANTS



The Center Cannot Hold

Fugitives... murderers... or unsung heroes?

The controversial Aberrants faction is outgunned, outnumbered and has the weight of the world against it. Aberrants wouldn't have it any other way.



Partial Transcript: the Amp Room Meeting, 6/1/08

• **Sophia Rousseau:** Greetings. We've assembled here today to...

• **Jacques Angel:** Where's Corbin?

• **Rousseau:** If we could just—

• **Angel:** Corbin! I wanna hear it from his mouth!

• **Unidentified Man:** Do you really want to put a man who amplifies emotion into a roomful of anxious novas? If you do, please give me some time to absent myself.

• **Angel:** Just who the fuck are you?

• **Unidentified Man:** Does that matter? Must I give my credentials before speaking sensibly?

• **Rousseau:** Our colleague is correct. Bringing André in here isn't going to do us any good right now. If you have any question about what happened to Jennifer Landers, ask me.

• **Edda Czniewski:** All right. Who killed her?

• **Rousseau:** That's one thing we want to find out.

• **Dr. Worm:** I can tell you who killed her. The same people who'd like to see us all dead — either physically, mentally or emotionally.

• **Czniewski:** Is it just me, or did it just start to stink in here?

• **Dr. Worm:** Very mature. I'm sure Cicero and Aristotle would be impressed by your *ad hominem* attacks, but right now what we need is reason and organization.

• **Rousseau:** Well spoken. First, I think we should—

• **Angel:** Well spoken my ass! I'm not going to breathe the same air as a Teragen sympathizer!

• **Unidentified Man:** Dr. Worm's philosophy can hardly be likened to that of Divis Mal.

• **Angel:** Why not? Don't both of 'em say that novas should do whatever the hell we want? What's there in your "philosophy" to keep me from bashing your brains in, Worm?

• **Dr. Worm:** Other than my ability to defend myself? Other than the likely repercussions of your action? Other than the foolishness of killing someone who has vital information about our *mutual* cause?



EXPOSÉ: ABERRANTS

• **Rousseau:** This contentiousness is getting us nowhere! Angel, Dr. Worm is welcome here, and if you don't like it you can answer to me, and to everyone else in this room!

• **Diane "Intergalactic" Holm:** We're wasting time!

• **Unidentified Man:** Agreed. If I can have 60 uninterrupted seconds....

• **Czniewski:** Who the hell are you?

• **Rousseau:** I'll vouch for him. He works for Utopia, he's in a sensitive position...

• **Dr. Worm:** Then what the hell is he doing here?

• **Rousseau:** ...and they don't know he's a nova.

• (Murmurs from the crowd.)

• **Unidentified Man:** I am in a position to know, and I suspect that there exists a secret directive within Utopia, dedicated to studying and controlling novas. I haven't nailed down its agenda yet, but I believe it includes widespread nova sterilization and the lobotomization of those they deem "unstable." I have not fully tracked its funding, but it possibly comes from sales of pharmaceuticals developed by Triton, derived from unlawfully imprisoned novas....

• **Czniewski:** This is insane!

• **Dr. Worm:** As crazy as a self-appointed "master race" attempting to liquidate an entire ethnic group, and using assembly-line techniques to do it?

• **Angel:** You've got some gall, bringing up the Nazis.

• **Dr. Worm:** Why's that? They represent everything I loathe and resist: the loss of individual freedom and the occlusion of personal responsibility. Just like the Teragen, and just like Utopia. Utopia uses stormtrooper tactics to seize the newly erupted when they're at their most vulnerable, it brainwashes them and uses them as pawns to fight its wars...why should we be surprised that it wants to sterilize them as well?

• **Chad "The Living Wreck" Berger:** Hey, I think we need to keep some sense of proportion here.

• **Danielle Coleridge:** Uh, Ms. Rousseau...do you think having him here is a good idea?

• **Angel:** If you have a problem with *Chad Berger*, there's something wrong with you, bitch!

• **Dr. Worm:** That's hardly called for. Mr. Berger's coziness with the Powers That Be is well established. I'll let him say his piece — that's his right. But I'll also admit I'm surprised to see such a prominent Uncle Tom nova here. Mr. Berger, aren't you a little scared that it might damage your reputation to be here?

• **Berger:** My reputation? What does that have to do with anything? I'm here 'cause Jenny's dead and I don't think André did it. I've said that in public, I'll say it now and I'll keep saying it.

• **Czniewski:** Heard anything about a "nova control conspiracy" inside Utopia?

• **Berger:** No... how would I?

• **Unidentified Man:** I suspect that the conspiracy, this "Proteus" if I may use the deceased's term, has no problem with well-regulated novas who identify themselves with public safety, as Mr. Berger has done. "Loose cannons" are far more likely to draw its ire. Such an organization's power is halved if it is observed: It wishes to remain unaccountable....

• **Angel:** You seem to know an awful lot about it.

• **Unidentified Man:** I ask myself what I'd do in its position. I'd want to remain "off the leash," free to pursue my objectives by whatever means necessary. I'd therefore isolate myself from highly public novas such as Mr. Berger or Ms. Dame, who I believe has now joined us. Its mistake was involving itself with Jennifer Landers, who was not only well known, but who was clever enough to uncover its dealings and honest enough to resist it. It was a small oversight, but I imagine "Proteus" has a very low margin of error. Jennifer Landers had evidence, the will to use it, and the fame to be heard. Therefore, she had to be removed.



TRANSCRIPT

Transcript of "Nova News Now!" N! Network, 6/20/08, "Opinion Forum" segment.

• **Trevor Crisp:** Welcome back to "Nova News Now." I'm your host, Trevor Crisp, and today we have two very special guests joining us for our "Opinion Forum." On my right is Chad Berger, better known as "The Living Wreck," a franchised municipal defender for the city of Chicago. Welcome, Chad.

• **Chad Berger:** Thanks, Trevor.

• **Crisp:** On my left is Detective Edgar Rhys, from the Calcutta P.D. Detective Rhys was the first on the scene after Jennifer "Slider" Landers was murdered.

• **Edgar Rhys:** It's an honor to be here, Trevor.

• **Crisp:** We're here today to deal with the controversy surrounding Jennifer Landers' tragic death. While we are all saddened by the loss of one of humanity's staunchest defenders, some novas have been claiming that the investigation of Slider's murder was mishandled. Chad, would you like to begin?

• **Berger:** Yeah. I'd, uh, like to read a prepared statement, actually. Here goes. Like all of us, I grieve over the death of Jennifer Landers. Just like everyone else, I want to see her killer found. But I don't believe André Corbin is guilty. I'm proud to call him a friend, just as I was proud to call Jennifer my friend. I don't want to see the tragedy of losing her doubled by having her friend and mine framed for the crime. I don't want that and I know she wouldn't either. We're all angry because we're sad, but we mustn't rush to judgment, or Jennifer's death will be the beginning of a chain of injustices — not the end of it.

• **Crisp:** A moving testament from a nova to his fallen friend. Detective Rhys, would you care to rebut?

• **Rhys:** I have no doubt that Mr. Berger's feelings are sincere, but as a policeman, I can't be swayed by emotions. I have to deal in facts. Fact: Corbin was in town. Fact: Landers let her assailant into her home. Fact: Corbin ran from her funeral and has been fleeing police inquiry since. Fact: Corbin's fingerprints were found all over the scene. Fact...

• **Berger:** Those fingerprints don't mean anything! I'm sure *my* fingerprints are there too. She was our friend, we went to her apartment and we didn't wear rubber gloves while we were there.

• **Rhys:** If Corbin is innocent, why is he running?

• **Berger:** Maybe he's afraid. Someone who could kill Jennifer could probably kill André too. If he was guilty, why go to her funeral in the first place?

• **Rhys:** To allay suspicion, of course. Look, I know it's sordid and ugly, but all the evidence points to Corbin, and if he's hiding from us, the

Torvil,
Margouless,
Sarben,
Smith —
others?

Untrue

TRANSCRIPT

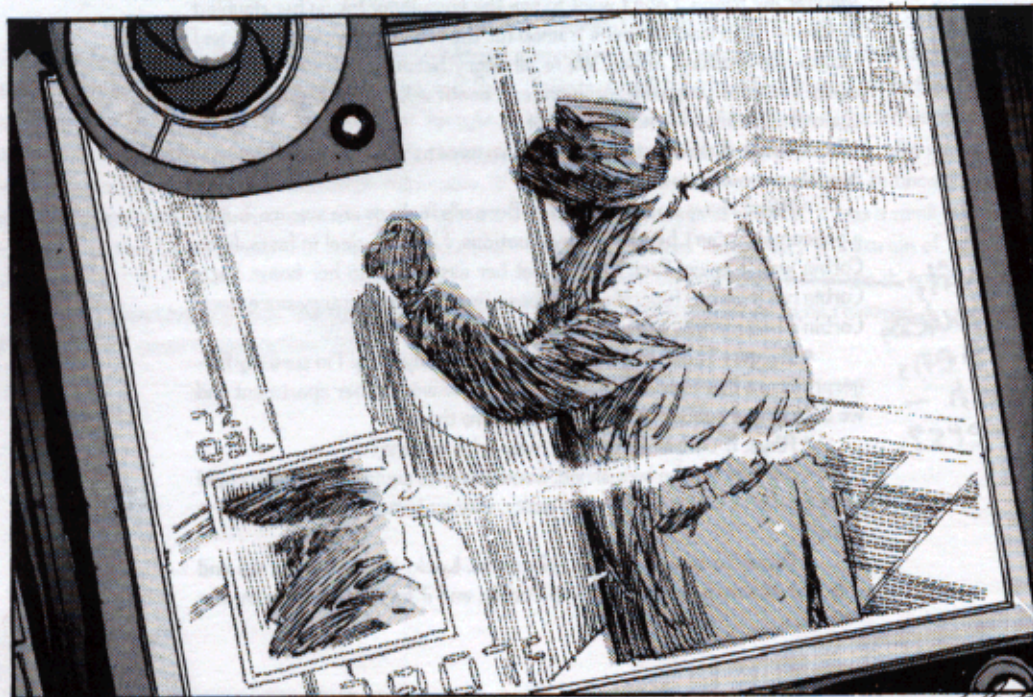
obvious surmise is that it's because he's concealing *more* evidence of his guilt. If he's innocent, let him come forward and explain what he was doing that evening.

• **Berger:** He *has* said what he was doing that evening. He was at the Third Degree from 8 PM to midnight. Then he went back to his hotel, where he was seen, and stayed there until the next morning.

• **Rhys:** That's his story: We've got witnesses saying that he left the Third Degree at 10:15. That gives him plenty of time to get to Landers' apartment by 11, when the surveillance tape shows her killer arriving. He could leave at 11:13 and get back to his hotel by midnight.

• **Berger:** Okay, maybe he *could* have done it, but that doesn't mean he *did*. You don't know him like I do. He's incapable of murdering anyone, especially Jenny Landers.

How does
an
emotional
broadcaster
murder
someone by
surprise?



[chinese/arithmetic encryption ON]

TO: FootballFan@p98f7l23.net

SUBJECT: Outback Mission

FROM: HavocHamster@anonymnode9.net

The coordinates were good, André. There was an armored facility there, just like the Heroin Heroine said — I don't think she set us up. God knows she's got as much to fear from Utopia as us, maybe more. Three unknown novas present, two of them at least "B"-class, just like she said. There were more soldiers than she told us to expect, but if they'd really been expecting all four of us, I'm sure they'd have had nova backup. They wouldn't have wanted even one survivor.

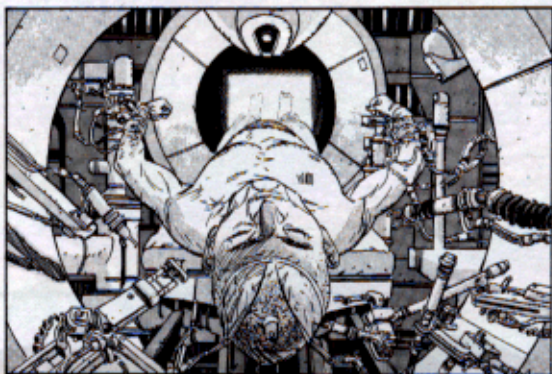
It was about what we expected. Tris concentrated on the baselines, scattering and incapacitating them before they could bring any really heavy gear to bear. One of the defending novas was a real brick shithouse — took two of my best right to the face without batting an eyelid. He was slow, though, and once we realized he didn't have any offense we just ignored him and concentrated on their plasma shooter. Remy tried to distract him while Joanne got close enough to suck him dry, but Remy wasn't quite fast enough — he got shot down. Didn't die then. I had to go toe to toe with the plasma guy and got a little singed, but by then Joanne was on him and she leeches him. We finished off the wall and told Remy to beat it, but he insisted he was okay to go on.

The last nova was on the inside — a bighead, probably a psychic. We sent Tris in to neutralize any telepathic bullshit, with Joanne and me ready to take the defender down fast if she (at least I think the bighead was female) looked too strong for Tris. But the bighead was trying to load their captives into a big armored semi-truck — planning to keep them from falling into our hands I suppose. She didn't put up much of a fight, went down in about four seconds.

There was this long row of tiny rooms — like pantries almost, only all in steel with these big metal tables. Most were empty; only about five tables had novas. The novas were all different kinds. Some looked almost baseline. Others were real...different. They were all restrained, steel bands over their arms, their legs and their eyes, and all of them had their heads cut open inside these glass domes that looked like big salad bowls. I don't know what the hell they were doing there, but they had every one of those poor bastards cut wide open to the M-R node. And they were *alive*, André. We took one look and started trying to figure out how to release them.

That's when it really went to hell. I should have thought it through. I guess I expected 'em to sit up and say, "Gee, thanks man. It was really shitty on that operating table!" Fuck. They freaked out and started wrecking anything they could get their hands on, which meant me, Tris, Joanne and Remy. Joanne went down first; she didn't even see it coming. She was leaning over to cut through one thing's leg bands when it sat up and pulped her skull, just like that. Remy had time to scream once — he was already hurt — and then he was down. Tris and I stared running, but without Remy to carry her she couldn't keep up and the thing that grabbed her was way beyond being scared or fooled or talked to.

Next time we find one of these bases, I say we just go in and kill everything. What they're doing doesn't leave people in any kind of condition to be "rescued."



Mission Report

TO: B12

FROM: Buzzcock

It's been a bit of legwork, but I think I've got a complete list of all the novas who were in Calcutta when Landers was murdered. It's a surprisingly high number, close to a dozen. However, there are a lot of them who aren't very likely suspects. I've put this in a chart to show my suspicions.

Name	Comments
André Corbin	Was at the Third Degree with Nolan Cramer when Slider died.
Nell Torvil	She has considerable control over molecular bonds, but she couldn't possibly flatten Landers with one blow.
Robin Emery	Landers' ex-boyfriend — an XWF tough....
Ibrahim Farouk	A heavy-duty elite with no alibi.
Kinte Margouless	This novox singer was performing when Landers died.
Gina Benet	A high-speed operative for Team Tomorrow Asia/Pacific.
Della Weisskopf	A powerful psychic — she could probably gain access, but she doesn't have the physical power to inflict Landers' fatal injury.
Armande Sarben	A suspected Teragen sympathizer with no psychic powers: Landers wouldn't talk to Sarben without a gun in her hand, let alone turn her back.
Violet Chao	A committed pacifist — but she does have the raw power, and she does work for Utopia....
Nolan Cramer	André Corbin alibis him — and that column of blue fire shooting out the top of his head would have shown up on the video.
Shelly Smith	She's physically powerful enough to kill Landers easily, but she leaks trace amounts of radiation. We went over Landers' apartment complex with a Geiger counter, which leaves Smith in the clear.

If Corbin didn't do it and it wasn't a baseline, I'd say our best bet is Farouk. Emery and Benet are also suspicious.

it's just
barely
possible



Atalaya, Peru

A gang of nova terrorists attacked the Ucayali Dam project near Atalaya late Thursday night. This new menace, calling themselves "Aberrants," caused an estimated 70 million dollars worth of damage, setting the Utopia-funded dam project back close to five months.

"This is a real tragedy," said project coordinator Sophia Chavana. "This dam would have provided safe, clean power for most of the continent, and now we may have to start from the very beginning. The entire foundation of the site has been undermined: Until we determine the full extent of the instability, we don't dare build again. They've made any big construction here a potential booby trap."

The eagerly awaited dam was already close to a year behind schedule due to sabotage and harassment by local troublemakers. In June, Peruvian novas Señor Diablo and Helene Marquez believed they had broken the regional resistance movement once and for all, but the Aberrant attack was completely unexpected. Señor Diablo was unavailable for comment: Helene Marquez stated that she did not think the Aberrants were directly connected to the indigenous terrorists.

"The locals were just a bunch of penniless bandits — the same kind of farmers whose parents joined the *Sendero Luminoso*. The Aberrants were something else again — they hit hard, fast and mean. I recognized their leader, too: It was that *pendejo* 'Doctor Worm.' I don't think a highbrow Teragen 'philosopher' like him would fight alongside communist baselines with dirty fingernails."

Román Sanchez, a local Utopia military strategist, fears that this is not an isolated inci-

dent. "I suspect the Aberrants are just flexing their muscles now — showing us what they can do before they make their demands. We think they're separate from the Teragen: They're better organized, and their agenda is far less airy and theoretical. I think these Aberrants are in it for money and personal power, pure and simple. They don't want ideological concessions like the Teragen: they're going (continued on page 16)

New Mutant Terror

Spike Spiers, special to the
Enquirer



Name: Robin Emery, aka "The Fallen"

Brief: A nova shootfighter known for his prodigious strength and speed. He trained to get on Team Tomorrow before ditching it for the American XWF circuit, though he never got much past the midcard. He and Landers were romantically involved for about three weeks in March-April 2007.

Suspicious Facts: If sufficiently enraged, Emery could have delivered the death blow. Landers might plausibly admit him to her apartment late at night. A local singer named Kaberi Dakshinamoorthy provides the only alibi he has on the night of Landers' death. She claims they were in bed when Landers was being killed.

Arguments Against: Dakshinamoorthy's apartment is in the same part of town as Landers' home, but there's a security camera that faces her front door. The camera shows Emery going in with Dakshinamoorthy at 7:30 that evening and not emerging until the following morning. The only exterior windows from her apartment look out on a busy street.

Furthermore, his only plausible motive is scorned love — but neither Landers nor Emery seemed to be particularly distraught when their relationship ended. They haven't been seen together since June 2007: Why would he take

revenge now? If it wasn't a crime of passion, why would he do it? Any conspiracy would presumably be too smart to use an assassin who could so readily be suspected.

Name: Ibrahim Farouk, aka "Radi Khanjar"

Brief: Farouk is a highly paid elite, operating under the name "Radi Khanjar" (which means "black dagger"). He's reticent about his powers, but he combines considerable physical prowess with substantial impact resistance and some form of psychic cloaking.

Suspicious Facts: Of all the novas in town when Landers was murdered, Farouk best fits the profile of a hired assassin. He could definitely take her down if he got the first shot at her unguarded back. He's an unlikely friend of Robin Emery. If the reports out of Israel are anything like accurate, Farouk's certainly capable of cold-blooded murder. He has no alibi for Landers' time of death and refuses to say why he was in Calcutta. Yet the police dismissed him as a suspect almost immediately.

Arguments Against: Landers barely knew Farouk, and certainly wouldn't let him into her apartment unless compelled. Reliable sources who've fought him say his powers let him screen himself from sight, but not disguise himself as another person.



EXPOSÉ: ABERRANT

Name: Gina Benet

Brief: A member of Team Tomorrow Asia/Pacific. She's a high-speed operator, capable of flight at supersonic speeds. She met Landers when T2M Europe had to combine their efforts with part of T2M A/P to save the Kastani offshore rig from a typhoon, and the two women remained casual friends afterward.

Suspicious Facts: She came into town the day of the crime and left the day after. Landers would probably admit her to her apartment, and might not suspect her of ill intentions. Most suspicious of all, she works directly for Utopia, and was involved in the now-notorious "Sri Lanka Eight" incident.

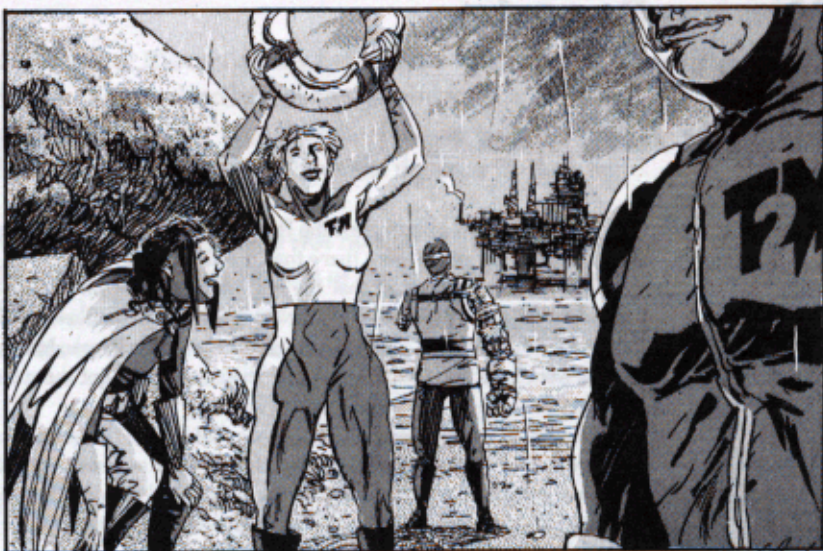
Arguments Against: Several novas I personally know and trust vouch for Benet and insist that she'd never commit a cold-blooded homicide. Landers might well have been suspicious of a Utopia employee. It's also questionable whether Benet could kill Landers with a single blow, even with the advantage of complete surprise. Finally, Landers' killer left by the front door at a baseline speed run: If Benet was the assassin, why wouldn't she flee at a higher speed?

Name: Violet Chao

Brief: A pacifist nova who works with Utopia, performing high-risk rescue missions. Chao's power profile includes enhanced strength, speed and endurance. She's most recently been stationed in Calcutta, working to protect baseline populations from collateral damage during nova elite actions.

Suspicious Facts: If her stance of passionate nonviolence is only a pose, it's possible that Chao could have killed Landers with a single blow. She works for Utopia, and Landers would be unlikely to suspect her.

Arguments Against: Two of Chao's friends (a worker with the regional Utopia environmental cleanup effort and his wife, an autofactory debugger) claim to have been visiting Chao at her home from 8:00 to 11:30, and the records from the gate at Chao's community confirm this. Furthermore, during the Teragen raid on Triton's Oran facility, she did not fight back against the Teragen with lethal intensity, even though her own life was in danger.



Mission Report

TO: B12

FROM: Antenna

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to Project
Utopia's
European
HQ

As suggested, I investigated the first police officers on the scene after Slider's death. There's definitely more there than meets the eye.

The official report said that the responding officers were Apoorva Chowdiah and Edgar Rhys. But they aren't beat cops or even detectives: In fact, they're the Calcutta P.D./UN liasons! The first cop on the scene was Prasan Mandavilli, and when the call went in to the station, Detective Thaunanon Kalsi got there before Chowdiah and Rhys because he was in the neighborhood.

Mandavilli was the easiest to approach, but he had the least to say, even once I got him loosened up. Basically, he said that Slider's neighbors heard a single, loud noise and called the police. (Lucky for us, they called the cops first and not T2M or Utopia!) He was in the area on a routine beat and responded first. He found Landers dead, in her kitchen, with a broken neck.

Kalsi was harder both to find and to approach. I don't think he made me for a nova at first, but was extremely suspicious when I asked about Landers. Probably thought I was from the media. When I said I was Jennifer's friend, he became extremely cautious. It took a great deal of effort to get him to lower his guard — he's got far more willpower than I've ever encountered in a baseline before. Eventually he relented. I recorded what he said, and it's transcribed below.

KALSI: I suppose anyone who can snuff a member of Team Tomorrow wouldn't have much trouble with a baseline Calcutta detective, eh? Maybe you're one of *them*, trying to find out how much I know. Well, it isn't much. I put it all in my report, which that snooty bitch Chowdiah is probably using for toilet paper as we speak. I'd like to think you're just what you say, a friend trying to find the truth. Time will tell. Or maybe it won't — but I will.

The vic was killed by a single blow to the back, that's for sure. That's right, one blow, despite that bullshit N! re-creation with the gun and the scary guys in trenchcoats and whatnot. If I'd never seen nova violence, I'd have said it was an industrial accident. Whoever did it hit her from behind, right between the shoulder blades, hard, smashing her against the wall of her kitchen. The impact was hard enough to crack the wall, and it was ferroconcrete. Her body was a mess — spine broken, ribs broken, and her neck was broken too. Not in a way consistent with the impact, either — her chin was tucked backward into her left shoulder and her head rotated clockwise. A fast, deliberate break.

Transferred
away, no
forwarding
address

I wish I'd gotten a look at the corpse. My bet is there was no bruise to the back — I think she was dead before she got a chance to form a hematoma. I saw the look on her face though — it was surprise, pure and simple. Whoever did it didn't even have the decency to close her eyes.

Other than the mark on the wall, there was no sign of a struggle. She was in her bathrobe, wearing slippers. No sign of forced entry at all, and I checked the lock. I don't know how much that means when you're dealing with novas, but I think she knew her killer.

Mission Report

TO: B12

FROM: Renaissance Man

José Diaz is dead, unexpectedly. They're calling it a heart attack, but that's anomalous with his health report. José was important. Communication going into and out of his office was covered with Utopia's highest grades of secrecy, his budget was gigantic, and he had few layers of fiscal oversight. Security precautions prevent me from tracking exactly whom he's been communicating with, but I saw several spikes in the number of incoming and outgoing emails and voice communications in 2008. The three biggest spikes centered around January 22, March 3 and May 8. In each case, events of critical importance to novas happened within the month. On January 26, the "Sri Lanka Eight" ambushed Team Tomorrow A/P, resulting in the deaths of three of the eight. On March 11, there was a clash between Teragen novas and a suspiciously well-armed and well-prepared battalion of baseline US troops on maneuvers in Nevada. On May 13, Jennifer Landers died.

I am inclined to think that Mr. Diaz was a part of the secret directorate — an important part. I believe he signed Jennifer Landers' death warrant. If his superiors have eliminated him, it is because he made a serious mistake. His death could be a message to other conspirators to act with more discretion, or it could be an attempt to burn the bridges that lead to them. I suspect a combination of these factors.

This is promising. If Diaz' superiors felt that he could lead people to them, that means they were afraid of people finding links between him and Landers' death. If Diaz ordered her death in haste, it may have been executed in a sloppy fashion. Clues may remain, and if they do, they point to her true killer.

What are they afraid of us learning? That is, of course, what we must discern.



STRUCTURE, GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

It's hard to ascribe attitudes to the Aberrant "organization" as a whole (other than the overarching theme of "paranoia"). After all, they're little more than a loose gang of 40 or so individuals as of July 2008. The only difference between them and a college sorority is that few sororities could flatten a major metropolitan area.

They're edgy and suspicious: Anyone who grew up in the 1990s heard all kinds of millennial conspiracy craziness, and now it looks like they've run afoul of the real thing. They "trust no one," even though they know "the truth is out there."

Within Aberrant society, three main branches have developed. One remains associated with Utopia and conceals its Aberrant activities. Another splintered off from Utopia after the Landers revelation, and has been hiding ever since. The third branch *never* liked Utopia and sees the Aberrant movement as its best chance to unshackle humanity from paternalistic authoritarianism.

The Hidden

The smallest segment of the Aberrants are those who continue to work with, or even *for*, Utopia. They're considered the "closet Aberrants" by the other two branches, but they're by far in the best position to find out what's really going on in the Project. They also tend to be the most conservative when it comes to taking action and taking risks. After all, they have the most to lose.

Goals

The primary goal of the Hidden is to identify any hidden conspiracy, isolate it and excise it while leaving the rest of Utopia intact. Easier said than done, of course. In pursuit of that main objective, the closet Aberrants have several other elements in their agenda.

- Identify trustworthy people (both nova and baseline) within the Utopia structure. After all, it's hard to know where the corruption is unless you know a few places it isn't.

- Recruiting. This is extremely dangerous, of course: Even if a potential recruit isn't aware of Proteus, he might still look askance at someone who insists André Corbin's "crazy conspiracy theories" are true. At best, an ally might be alienated. At worst, the would-be recruiter may get written up for a psychological evaluation.

- Follow the money. Proteus is a wily prey, but it takes a lot of money to track, hire and manipulate novas. When that money moves, it leaves tracks, and a smart investigator can follow them. The same goes for just about any resource, from electricity to personnel to communication bandwidth to computer power.

Structure

Sophia Rousseau takes personal responsibility for the covert actions of the Hidden Aberrants. She's aware that the people she's managing are amateurs, so she plays them very safe. She'd like it if each Hidden Aberrant knew only the person who recruited him and the people he recruited. In practice, however, many of the Aberrants joined up in pairs or groups, and they're used to sharing information with each other — never realizing how many holes this pokes in their defenses against discovery.

Practices

Rousseau communicates with her agents only through a series of blind drops. (Often these drops are tailored to the agents' nova abilities.) She gives strict instructions that the closet Aberrants are not to recruit or start new investigations without her express permission, but in practice, there's nothing she can do to stop people: After all, it's a voluntary association.

The Quarry

In between the conservative "moles" who still work with Project Utopia, and the rebels who want to smash the whole system, there are those novas who severed ties after hearing Slider's claims. In many ways, they've got it worse than anyone. The closet cases don't need to be protected from Utopia (yet), and the Radicals have been on the run long enough to be good at it. The Quarry (or Quitters, as they're sometimes known) are in the position of fleeing from a worldwide conspiracy without any idea how to do so. The Quarry are by far the most numerous faction, making up nearly half of the Aberrants as a whole.

Goals

Running and hiding take their toll, and many novas are unhappy with such a passive pursuit. Faced with a need to do something constructive for their cause, they've become the Aberrants' rescue and recruiting branch. They're still trying to stay alive, of course, but



the Quarry are also focusing on releasing unjustly imprisoned novas and finding the newly erupted. Many eventually edge closer to the Radical viewpoint, lashing out at Utopia. Others try to strike back only at Proteus, by trying to unearth its activities.

Structure

André Corbin is the *de facto* leader of the Quarry. He's not very organized, and he's not very experienced, but what he lacks in those qualities he makes up for in courage and heart. A chaotic and inefficient system of passwords, countersigns and safe houses is developing, but these tools are often compromised almost as quickly as they're established. The biggest factor in Corbin's favor is the fraternal nature of the undertaking. Lots of novas know other novas, and that recognition can overcome some of the problems inherent to being an amateur fugitive.

Practices

By and large, the Quarry are trying to find a safe place to hide out. Once they get rested, some attempt can be made to develop false identities — or even to try to undermine and infiltrate Proteus. For now, though, they want to hide the free and rescue the captive.

Rescuing imprisoned novas has become a *cause célèbre* for Corbin and his closest followers. Some of his rescues of other novas have impressed the Rebels and astonished the conservatives. He's also led two charges

into heavy containment prisons — one in the US and one in China — breaking out novas that he thought had been framed or railroaded. In a situation where Rousseau would write someone off and cut her losses, Corbin will risk his own life to lead in a team to bust out a nova comrade. The danger inherent to such activities has only enhanced Corbin's reputation and popularity with his followers — while increasing his notoriety in the baseline media.

Recruiting missions have been a natural outgrowth of their rescue efforts. The novas involved reason that every nova they find is one more nova that Utopia can't indoctrinate, lie to, sterilize and manipulate. Many among the Hidden feel that these Quarry use dubious methods — the phrase "abduction" gets used a lot — but the recruiters insist that it's the only way. Since the only ones willing to go after newly erupted novas (who often have dangerously little control over their powers) are the deeply committed, there's not much the Hidden can do, except complain.

The Rebels

The Aberrant Rebels tend to be people who were on Utopia's shitlist even before Landers got nailed. They're a motley crew indeed, ranging from the followers of Dr. Worm's extreme individualism (and yes, they're aware of the irony), to deformed, high-Taint novas, to ne'er-do-wells who just don't play well with others.

Goals

The Rebels would be delighted if Utopia was smashed into a thousand pieces and scattered to the winds. Sure, they'll grudgingly admit that Utopia has done some good things, but they hold that a dear price will be paid in the future. That price will be lost discoveries and lost freedom, and it will be paid by novas.

Accordingly, the Rebels want to destroy Utopia. However, they don't want to harm the innocent civilians who have been suckered by Utopia's slick PR. They're also hesitant to alienate the rest of the Aberrants by acting too swiftly. But though they chafe against their constraints, they're still dedicated to the goal.

Structure

Like the Quarry, the Rebels have bolt holes, pass-words and methods to communicate in secret. Unlike the Quarry, the Rebels are fairly successful at concealing themselves. This has led to some friction between the two factions. The Quitters want the radicals to let them into their underground. The Rebels are afraid that doing so will compromise their secrecy — and with good reason.

Dr. Worm is the leader of the Rebels, and even he doesn't know all their members. Only his most trusted colleagues know where he is and how to contact him. He gives his orders to them, and his plans filter down to the

"rank-and-file" novas and to baseline allies. He's currently working on building a completely isolated social structure within the Rebel faction — one group of "pure" Rebels, who will be completely cut off from the Quarry and the rest of the Aberrants, in case of some disastrous betrayal. The other, "open" branch will have more contact, in order to keep the entire Aberrant organization harmonious.

Practices

The Rebels rob, harass and sabotage Utopia projects. They're careful: They don't want to let Utopia's PR machine paint them as antisocial bastards. Primarily, they go after Utopia projects that are "regrettably necessary for the long-term good." One example was the Ucayali Dam, which was indeed going to provide plenty of electrical power — but at the cost of flooding out a lot of local farms. As far as Utopia (and the Peruvian government) was concerned, there was no place for subsistence farmers in the five-year plan. Their property had been nationalized, and many of them had already been resettled into urban areas with demand for unskilled labor. Only a few stubborn troublemakers remained and complained — until Dr. Worm caught wind of the project. Now that high costs, sabotage and global attention have made the dam untenable, the grateful locals are more than willing to help the Rebels hide there.



Relations With Other Groups

The Aberrants have no formal contact with nations or other world groups. Each of the three main branches of the Aberrants tends to have different opinions about the other power groups in the world. The conservative Hidden branch perceives Proteus' influence as intense, but small, so they're more likely to trust other groups (excepting the Teragen, of course). The Quarry and the Rebels are far more paranoid.

Utopia

Utopia wears a big black hat as far as the Rebels are concerned: The whole damn Project is just a kinder, gentler fascism. The Hidden are far less vehement, and think the Rebels are going to throw out a whole lot of babies with very little bathwater. To the Hidden, Project Utopia has been hijacked from within. Like a cancer in the brain, these masterminds are affecting the behavior of the whole

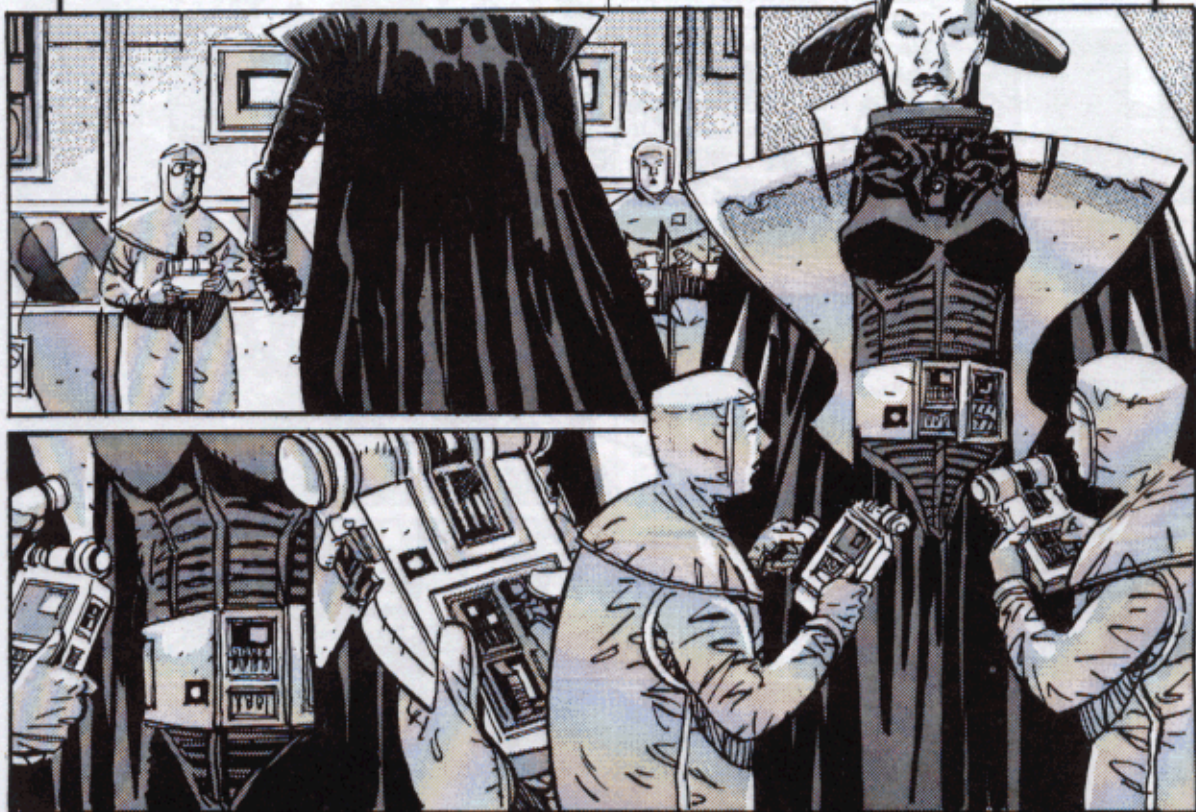


body, but the infection is still localized. The closet Aberrants hope that they can surgically remove the tumor and leave the body unharmed. The Quitters don't have the luxury of contemplating just how pure or corrupt Utopia is. They're too busy hiding out from its minions.

Team Tomorrow

Some of the Rebels were tangling with Team Tomorrow even before there was an Aberrant movement. The kindest thing the Radicals have to say is that most of the T2M personnel may be too dumb or naive to know just how vile their employers are. T2M is more commonly regarded as the conspiracy's favorite PR punk hammer, good for nailing targets who are unpopular enough to make a nice public spectacle. When T2M members aren't acting like hitmen on the borderline between mass media and mass murder, they're sent out to "acquire" erupting novae for indoctrination. They're the visible sign of Utopia's corruption: overwhelming force sent to dictate terms, and you're supposed to *like* them too.

The Hidden consider this a gross overstatement, and if it weren't for Rousseau's and Corbin's explicit orders to the contrary, they might make some overtures to T2M. To the closet Aberrants, T2M represents all that's *best* about Utopia — a commitment to the betterment of humanity, public symbols of human potential and global unity and a strength that comes from trust, sacrifice and integrity.





Corbin and the Quarry — a few of whom are, themselves, former T2M operatives — take a moderate view between the “jackbooted thug” model and the “best hope of humankind” concept. As far as they’re concerned, Team Tomorrow comprises a bunch of powerful novas who’ve been snowed by the conspiracy — just like the UN, the global media and everyone else. They’re not saints, they’re not stormtroopers, they’re just misled people trying to do the best they can. Of course, that’s not much comfort when they come for *you* in the middle of the night....

Triton Foundation

The Hidden remind you about the AIDS cure, the elimination of breast cancer and the spinal column research. The Rebels have horror stories about secret research facilities where novas are vivisectioned in order to uncover the secrets of the M-R node. Pretty much all Aberrants are convinced by the data about nova infertility. Slider’s evidence suggests that Triton developed a genetic matrix that “reprograms” a nova’s enhanced immune system to recognize native gametes as pathogens

— basically, a technique to turn a nova’s own white blood cells against native sperm and egg.

The Directive

Both the Hidden and the Rebels are afraid of the Directive, seeing in it a reflection of the same sort of thing that has seized control of Utopia. The Quarry, however, hopes that the Directive could be an ally. After all, it was apparently formed to investigate suspicious nova-level events: Surely this “Proteus” business qualifies....

The Teragen

The Hidden and Quarry both think the Teragen are your basic gleeful psychopaths. Sometimes they’re right. The Rebels, however, have a better appreciation for the Teragen philosophy of liberation. Plus, it doesn’t hurt that the Teragen is keeping Utopia off the Aberrants’ backs — or at least dividing the project’s attention.

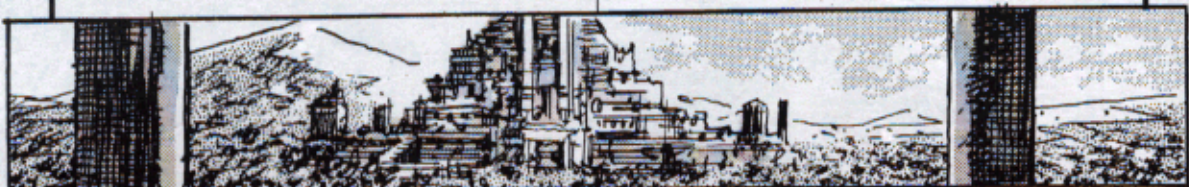
World Governments

The European Commonwealth

Utopia’s stronghold: Don’t go there unless you have no choice or you *really* know what you’re doing. On this, all three factions agree.

The United States

Government suspicion makes Utopia easier to avoid in the USA. The US government isn’t all that fond of no-



was off a corporate or media leash, but if you keep your nose clean, it generally has bigger fish to fry. On the other hand, if you cross the federal government, it won't drag you in for questioning; it'll come at you with everything it's got.

Japan

Much like the US, the Japanese government is in no hurry to help out Utopia. In general, the Japanese people love novas as a cultural concept, but the government attitude is far more ambivalent. Japan has an extremely ordered society, and it does not tolerate abuse of its hospitality. Some prefectures are willing to kick out *gaijin* novas on the flimsiest of pretexts, so if you hide out in Japan, make sure your papers are in order.

China

Also like the US, only less organized at the local level and consequently an even easier place to hide. A nova with friends in the army can get hired for work in Tibet — and no one asks questions about elites working the Tibetan or Kashmir hot zones.

Important Personalities



Sophia Rousseau

- In Monte Carlo, Count Orzaiz loses thousands of francs at dice to a mysterious, masked woman. As they play, the dice seem to change direction in midair. At the end of the game, the woman pulls off her mask. With a wry smile, Orzaiz kisses her hand and says, "Always a pleasure, Madame Rousseau."

- In Port-au-Prince, a mitoid spike pusher breathes his last, dying with no idea who got the drop on him, or how, or even what force is killing him with such painful speed. As his vision fades to red, a voice whispers in his ear, "Sophia Rousseau sends her greetings."

- In London, a 56-year-old refrigeration engineer discovers that her bank records have vanished, along with her credit rating and mortgage debt. Throughout the city, a stockbroker, a Unitarian minister and a shipping clerk discover the same thing. The only thing these four women have in common is their name: Sophia Rousseau.

Many people in the small nova community recognize her name, but a surprising number can't recall exactly when or where they met her. Sophia Rousseau, it seems, has always been around, like gravity or oxygen. She must have been an early erupter — she's been around for awhile — but she wasn't early enough to create a real media prop wash, like *The Fireman* or *The Living Wreck*. She always seems to know a lot of details about recent elite actions, or fights between Team Tomorrow and Teragen wannabes, but no one ever sees her at the scene. She moves with ease among the soldiers, the entertainers, the business predators and the do-gooders and the Utopian architects, yet she doesn't really belong with any of them. She's respected and feared, though no one seems able (or, perhaps, willing) to say how she's earned her reputation.

Two pieces of data are known about Sophia Rousseau. One comes from video footage of her reducing a promising new Australian XWF fighter to vapor after a brief fight. (The courts in Sydney ruled self-defense.) The other is a classified UN document that somehow got stolen and posted. In it, a nova telepath described Rousseau as "a storm of psychic static" and said that he couldn't even get close for fear of burning out his own powers.

No country has gone so far as to issue an arrest warrant, but she's being "sought for questioning" in the USA, Great Britain, Tanzania, Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

André Corbin

Growing up a good-looking charmer, André always secretly thought that brains were overrated. ("You'll never see Einstein on a lager bottle.") Of course, it didn't hurt that he had more athletic talent in a toenail clipping than some teams had in their starting lineup. Football was easy for him, which meant money was easy for him, and women had always been easy for him too. (Well, not every woman, but enough.) He openly mocked his sporting opponents — not just their skill, but their looks, their

ancestry and their personal hygiene — and alienated even some of his team's fans with his open contempt for tradition and respect. ("Aw Christ, I'm about to run for a whole shitin' football game. Why do I have to stand through some pissant country's national anthem on top of it?")

When he erupted, he figured he'd dominate the nova world the way he'd dominated the sporting world, and it just did not happen. He didn't take orders well, a habit that left him in the hospital for a month and nearly cost him both legs. ("The injury was nae so bad as hearing that cunt Pax lecture me about how 'mebbe now I'd learn me lesson about following orders.") The only member of T2M who offered him any sympathy was Jennifer Landers.

He was on Team Tomorrow for only a few months before personality conflicts boiled over. He constantly tested his limits, and his superiors responded by tightening their restrictions on him. It came to a head in the Berlin Waldorf-Astoria, when he hit Caestus Pax in the face with a cream pie. His emotional resonance powers ensured that every baseline present shared in his mirth.

Today, Corbin is a different man — or maybe just the same man in wildly different circumstances. While he always made much of his working-class childhood, he was always sheltered from two things: scorn and personal failure. Even people who hated him had to admit he was talented. But now all the corner kicks in the world can't erase a reputation for brutality, treachery and cowardice. He's been thrust into a cold, humorless world of fear and retreat, and his only constant companion is the knowledge that his best friend died and he couldn't save her.

Corbin also has to learn discipline for the first time in his life. He trained hard as an athlete, but then he always had the love of the game to keep him buoyed up. He has easy control over his physical prowess, but he never felt the need or the inclination to master his emotions — so while his "Bending" power of emotional increase and manipulation is stronger than ever, his control is erratic. Sometimes he acts like an accidental emotional broadcaster, unintentionally forcing his moods onto everyone around him. Other times, he's like an echo chamber that amplifies ambient emotions. Either type of "leakage" usually makes his life harder.



Kimberly Dame

Kimberly Dame has been a class act ever since she first appeared on the music scene in 2000. No one could deny that she was stupendously beautiful, and if she didn't have the songwriting skills of, say, Alejandra, her novox covers of big-band music from the first half of the previous century were different enough to make her stand out, even in the quirky world of novox music.

Dame is perpetually charming and gracious, and if she's a bit vague about her past, well, that adds to her mystique. It's understandable: She knows that no matter how good she looks now, people might feel a bit weird if they knew she erupted at the advanced age of 102.

Kimberly Dame was born in Boston in 1898. She sang those torch songs when they were new. She was a flapper, one of her illegitimate children was a hippie at Woodstock, and her grandkids grew up playing Atari while the Soviet Union got ready to collapse. She's seen the turns of two centuries, and never for a moment thought that her body would turn back the clock and return her to the beauty of her youth. Hell, what she's got is *better* than the beauty of her youth.

Dame's a cagey old broad — it's hard to entertain men through two world wars without a certain amount of guile — and she's buried her past good and deep. She's provided hideouts for fleeing Aberrants, but no one's exactly sure why she's backing the cause. Most think that she (like many of the rest of them) was persuaded by Slider's evidence. That's not it, though. She's with the Aberrants because she's heard the words "Triton" and "Proteus" and "Æon Society" before — and because this Divis Mal character looks awfully damn familiar....



Dr. Toren Cargill, aka "Doc Worm"

Toren Cargill got his Ph.D. in Philosophy at the tender age of 20, way back in 1990. Initially it didn't do him a lot of good: He had a lot of radical ideas and wasn't shy about expressing them. He loudly espoused anarchy, but what kept him out of the university community was his blistering contempt for poststructuralism. When the pendulum swung back toward a view of reality as actually real (the so called "true history" movement, founded in 2003), Cargill was riding the top of the wave. Always controversial, eloquent and arrogant, Cargill was a point of connection between the ivory tower of cutting-edge thought and the wider world of media dissemination.

By the time he got caught sleeping with several students of both genders, Cargill had tenure. He got fired anyway, then turned around and sued the college. He claimed that his philandering was simply an expression of his philosophy of life (that is, a potent mixture of political anarchy and personal responsibility) and that

therefore the university had violated its tenure agreement. He was testifying (loudly) on his own behalf when he erupted.

Cargill lost his case against the college but had a brief (and lucrative) career as a media commentator on nova matters before his beliefs and opinions got him in trouble again. Claiming that government regulation of individuals was unethical was scary enough when the individuals in question were baselines. His claims that novas shouldn't be subject to any laws other than their own consciences got him blacklisted as a "Teragen apologist," even though the other half of his philosophy (personal responsibility) was anathema to Teragen selfishness and caprice.

Doctor Worm considers Project Utopia an exercise in fatuous, totalitarian do-goodism. He finds the name particularly ironic ("Utopia" literally means "no place" — the only place where Dr. Worm thinks such pie-eyed tactics can work). He's amused even while he's appalled: He deeply believes that no matter how good Utopia appears at first, it must inevitably end in thought policing, purges and mass murder. ("It won't be genocide this time — too passé. It will start as novacide and end with the liquidation of everyone who dares disagree with the ruling idiom. I guess one could call it 'idiocide' — the murder of an idea. In this case, the idea of freedom.")

Dr. Worm's nova powers are as striking and disturbing as his ideas. His entire body has become elastic, hideously stretchy and monstrously strong. Furthermore, a thick, retractable tentacle extrudes itself from his stomach, tipped by a face so gruesome that it makes seasoned combat veterans faint. He can look normal if he chooses, but he rarely makes that choice.

His loathing for Utopia puts Dr. Worm at odds with many of his fellow Aberrants, but no one can deny that he is particularly adept at pinpointing those areas where Utopia can most easily be disrupted, tangled up and publicly humiliated.

Sample Characters



The Mole

Most people who meet Asa Karadakas think the only remarkable thing about him is his name. He's average looking. He doesn't use big words. Maybe a little on the polite and friendly side, but no one's going to complain: Asa Karadakas seems like the kind of guy you want working in your department, troubleshooting your core processor or debugging your distributed network.

Lots of people think that. They're thinking exactly what Karadakas wants them to think. In actuality, Karadakas is a nova. He can't crush buildings or cloud the minds of normal men, but he thinks differently than almost anyone else on the planet.

Asa Karadakas has no subconscious mind. Most humans, nova or not, have a divided consciousness, with conflicting desires, hidden emotions and subliminal urges tossing the self around like a ship on a stormy sea. Asa has none of that. He's aware of every thought and feeling, knowing why he thinks and feels that way. He can prioritize his urges and simply negate any that are unpleasant, distracting or counterproductive. He is never nervous or guilty or depressed: while he still has feelings, they never conflict to produce such inefficient mental states. Because his concentration is total and constant, he can learn something perfectly the first time he does it. Because no task is delegated to the unconscious mind, he performs every action with the finesse of an expert and the focus of a Zen master. His Aberrant allies have code named him "Renaissance Man." (This over his objections: He's well aware that code names should have no meaning.)

He comes across as a normal human being because other people are so easy for him to fool. He is a midlevel administrator for Utopia's communication and computer network. He's close enough to the top that he can get the access he needs, but not so important that he stands out. His balance between access and anonymity is perfect.

Just like everything else he does.

Concept: Nobody

Nature: Analyst

Physical Attributes

Strength 3

Dexterity 3

Abilities

Might 4

Athletics 5,

Drive 5 (De-

fensive Driving),

Firearms 5,

Legerdemain 5,

Martial Arts 5,

Melee 5,

Pilot 4,

Stealth 5

Endurance 5,

Resistance 5

Stamina 2

Mental Attributes

Perception 3

Abilities

Awareness 5,

Investigation 5

Intelligence 4

Academics 5,

Bureaucracy 5,

Computer 5,

Engineering 5,

(Icy Manipulator)

Intrusion 5,

Linguistics 5,

Medicine 4,

Science 5,

Survival 4

Biz 4,

Rapport 5

Abilities

Intimidation 5,

Style 4

Interrogation 5,

Streetwise 5,

Subterfuge 5

Command 5,

Etiquette 5,

Perform 1

Wits 3

Social Attributes

Appearance 2

Manipulation 3

Charisma 2

Backgrounds: Backing 3, Dormancy 5, Resources 3

Willpower: 10

Quantum: 1

Quantum Pool: 22

Taint: 0

Initiative: 6

Movement: Walk 7m, Run 15m, Sprint 29m

30 Nova Points

Trait	Cost
126 Ability dots	21
Mega-Intelligence 1	3
Mega-Wits 1	3
Mega-Manipulation 1	3



The Fellow Traveler

Ask Chad Berger's agent the reason for her client's success, and you'll be told it's because Chad's so ordinary. He looks normal — not even handsome or striking, just *normal*, like a guy you'd see hauling trash or running a snowplow or going to work on the bus. He's plain, unvarnished, simple (in a good way). Possibly even "homespun."

Of course, none of that did Chad Berger a damn bit of good when he was 20, out of high school and working two jobs (maintenance man and convenience-store clerk) to make ends meet. His everyday mien did him no good until he got held up by a jittery speed freak and discovered that bullets could not harm him. The security camera footage of Chad Berger taking three gunshots to the body and face before lunging over the counter to subdue his assailant with a Slim Jim display rack made the evening news, and Chad Berger had become the first nova to erupt publicly in Chicago.

After a month of intensely unpleasant scrutiny from the media (and the scientific community), Chad signed on with the city of Chicago as a "special municipal defender." He also hired Jan Okamura as his agent — possibly the smartest thing he ever did. She christened him "The Living Wreck"; parlayed his "Joe Sixpack" image into a series of highly amusing advertising endorsements; and got him on nova-friendly talk shows, where his plain speaking was an instant hit.

Chad Berger is one of the most popular novas in the US, largely because he's so reassuring. He's what people want novas to be: a fellow just like them, only with superpowers, who's willing to put it on the line defending his city. He gives people the chance to say, "If I turned into a nova, I'd be okay: I'd be like him."

It doesn't hurt that Chad honestly *is* a nice guy. His volunteer work on safety issues ("Even I wear my seat belt.") and work with special rescue squads has gotten him in tight with Chicago Mayor Winfrey. While he has no physical weaknesses, he does have a soft spot for the ladies: He's still shy and modest, but there are certainly plenty of women around him who are neither.

Berger's also been close to Utopia since the beginning, but his friendships with Jennifer Landers and André Corbin have convinced him that there's something rotten going on. He's openly stated on several occasions that he doesn't think Corbin killed Slider. Privately, he's been asking questions about Utopia and giving money to the Aberrants when he can.

Right now, his Q Ratings are so high that he's practically beyond reproach. It would take a lot to make the public turn on their favorite hero, but if they did turn, they'd hate him deeply for a perceived betrayal.

Concept: Celebrity

Nature: Caregiver

Physical Attributes

Strength 3

Dexterity 3

Stamina 4 (Everlastin')

Mental Attributes

Perception 2

Intelligence 2

Wits 2

Social Attributes

Appearance 2

Manipulation 3

Charisma 3

Backgrounds: Attunement 1, Backing 3, Influence 4, Resources 4

Willpower: 6

Quantum: 4

Quantum Pool: 28

Taint: 1

Initiative: 5

Movement: Walk 7m, Run 15m, Sprint 29m

Trait	Cost
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Mega-Stamina 4	12
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Hardbody Enhancement	0
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Resiliency Enhancement	3
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Invulnerability: Impact 1	3
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Abilities

Brawl 3

Drive 2,

Firearms 2

Endurance 5,

Resistance 5

Abilities

Awareness 2

Rapport 2

Abilities

Command 2,

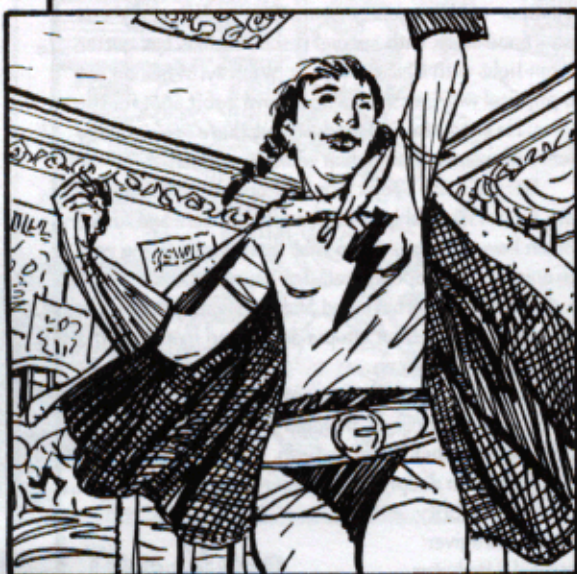
Subterfuge 1

Etiquette 2,

Perform 1,

Savvy 2

Invulnerability: Heat 1	3
Mega-Strength 1	3
5 Background dots	1
3 Willpower dots	3
Sensory Shield 2	2



The Loose Cannon

To hear Carmelita Aguillar — or, as she prefers to be called, “Detonator” — tell it, eruption is the only break she’s gotten in her life. She was a penniless Latino street kid in Sydney, Australia — a minority even among the underclass. She was a little too old to be good at pickpocketing and begging, and was (in the words of her “protector” Cho Tramh) “getting up to hooking age.” She disagreed, and when Cho tried to enforce his decree, she erupted. She took out Cho, her potential client and about half a city block.

T2M A/P novas were on the scene fast, ready for an ugly fight. Lucky for Carmelita, there was one waiting for them: a Teragen nova with a grudge who also happened to be close by. The Utopians found him a likelier candidate for “monster of the week” than a grubby 14-year-old.

Carmelita talks the tough talk, but she still has nightmares (inadvertently fed by her Radical companions) about faceless nova operatives descending from the sky on pillars of flame, hunting for her. That’s when she’s not having nightmares about the death of her parents, or about killing Cho (who was her father figure since the age of nine) or many of the other hideous things that happened to her on the streets. Her adolescent psyche is a welter of unresolved issues, which she does nothing to confront. She denies it all, considering it her “unhappy childhood” and ignoring the fact that in many ways, she’s still a child.

Dr. Worm managed to find her before Utopia did, and his philosophy of self-reliance appealed to her almost as much as his promises to tame her powers. Though hesitant to trust a stranger, she was desperate: She’d already killed two more people accidentally, providing her with still more nightmares.

Carmelita is a “detonator”: With just an effort of will, she can cause a handful of atoms to split, releasing heat, light and kinetic energy. She can instinctively use this to propel her body along the lines of its natural movement: Her superhuman strength and speed aren’t caused by actual muscle power, but by the application of tiny detonations. If she lifts something, her palms briefly spark and glow as she generates the thrust. Unfortunately, her power is not completely untainted, and her impurity manifests when she sweats or weeps: A few atoms of the liquid detonate, emitting heat and a pearlescent light.

By far her favorite power is flight. She doesn’t have a lot of control, since she moves herself by detonating the soles of her shoes (typically platform boots — it doesn’t take many atoms to propel her, but the soles do tend to get pitted and melted a bit). She does have a lot of power, though.

Right now, her entire attitude toward life can be summed up as, “What’s the point of being able to blow things up if you don’t use it?” Dr. Worm hopes he can mature her attitude in time, but for now finds her a gleeful companion for his cat-and-mouse games with Utopia.

Concept: Thrillseeker

Nature: Bravo

Physical Attributes

Strength 3

Dexterity 4 (Jumpy)

Stamina 3

Mental Attributes

Perception 2

Intelligence 1

Wits 3

Social Attributes

Appearance 3

Manipulation 2

Charisma 3

Backgrounds: Cipher 2, Contacts 1, Node 4

Willpower: 3

Quantum: 5

Quantum Pool: 30

Initiative: 7

Movement: Walk 7m, Run 17m, Sprint 35m, Flight 48m/350km

Taint: 4 (Opalescent Sweat/Tears)

Nova Points 30

Abilities

Brawl 3

Firearms 2,

Melee 1,

Stealth 3

Abilities

Awareness 3

Intrusion 1,

Linguistics 1

Abilities

Intimidation

2, Style 1

Streetwise 3,

Subterfuge 3

Trait	Cost
Mega-Strength 1	3
Mega-Stamina 1	2
Mega-Dexterity 1	3
Luck 1	1
Flight 2	6
Quantum +1	5
Disintegration 2	10

For Storytellers Only

Mina Takamura

Mina Takamura is a highly respected member of Utopia. Though not as flashy as the powers of Team Tomorrow, her uncanny perception has been one of the key information sources for Utopia's battle against world pollution and ecological disaster. She joined the Aberrants only recently, but several members of the group have high hopes that her clairsentient and precognitive abilities will uncover the mysterious "Proteus" conspirators wherever they hide.

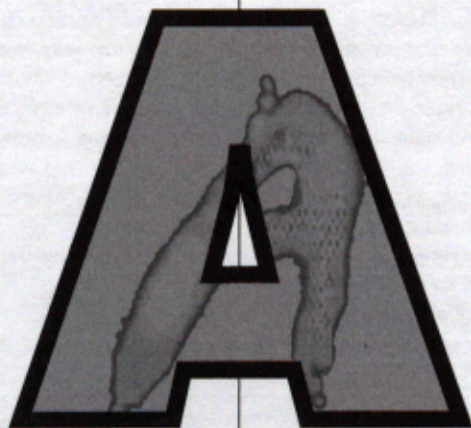
Unfortunately for the Aberrants, Proteus beat them to the punch. The powers of precognition and clairsentience are of particular interest to Proteus. Proteus' resident telepath has taken extraordinary steps to ensure that Mina does not remember being invited to join Proteus, does not remember her refusal and certainly does not remember having a sample of her brain tissue extracted by force. As far as Mina's concerned, she never heard of Proteus until she was approached by one of her friends — a friend who had just joined the Aberrants.

Mina is completely sincere in her desire to purify Utopia of any sinister influences; but even her oracular powers are blind to Proteus' surveillance of her every



physical perception. Using cloned brain material, Proteus scientists have developed a sort of brainwave resonator, tuned solely to Mina Takamura. Using it, their directors can see what she sees, hear what she hears, feel what she feels. So far they have been frustratingly unable to access her quantum visions, but hearing her describe them to others is the next best thing. Several scientists working on the project are hoping to expand the resonance so that it can send thoughts or ideas, instead of merely receiving sensory impressions.

Currently, a skilled telepath might sense something a little odd about Mina. (Rousseau felt something, which is why she keeps Takamura isolated from the rest of the Aberrants as much as she can.) It's not blatant or powerful...it's almost as if she's reading her own mind.



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